



Colorado Office of the Child's Representative

2013 Annual Report to the General Assembly
September 1, 2013



The Office of the Child's Representative (OCR) is required by C.R.S. § 13-91-105 to submit a report to the General Assembly in September of each year. The report provides an update of the OCR's mandated efforts to provide and oversee best interests legal representation for children in Colorado. The report includes an overview of OCR's major accomplishments, goals, and fiscal management of appropriations.

The Office of the Child's Representative provides competent and effective best interests legal representation to children who have been abused, neglected or abandoned, impacted by high conflict domestic relations disputes, or charged with delinquent acts and without a parent or guardian able to protect their best interests during the proceedings. In FY 13, **OCR spent 95.25% of its budget on attorney services**, training, and CASA support and only 4.75% on central administration. **OCR spent 81% of attorney services expenditures on dependency and neglect cases.** OCR provides legal services through state employees in the OCR El Paso County GAL Office and contracts with 264 attorneys skilled in juvenile law throughout the state and in every judicial district to provide mandated legal services. The contract entities are **small businesses**, including sole practitioners, law firms, and non-profit organizations.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- **OCR continues to emphasize data-driven decision-making** with implementation of extensive attorney performance assessments in spring 2013. OCR expanded its data collection on each attorney under evaluation to include, interviews of children/youth, parents, and caregivers; court observations; writing sample assessments; expanded stakeholder feedback; and selected reports from OCR's case management and billing system.
- **OCR revised practice standards** to emphasize youth voice and add counsel for children in D&N cases to OCR's oversight responsibilities.
- **The assessment of pilot programs to deliver GAL services through multidisciplinary offices** in Arapahoe and Denver counties marked an important step as OCR partnered with DU's Graduate School of Social Work to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot programs. The DU students developed evaluation plans in fall 2012, collected data during winter 2013, and provided initial results in spring 2013. The OCR is continuing its assessment of the pilot program.



Office of the Child's Representative

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Linda Weinerman
Executive Director

Members of the 69th General Assembly:

It is my pleasure to introduce the Office of the Child's Representative Report to the General Assembly for 2013. Our agency has a singular mission: to improve attorney best interests representation for Colorado's children involved in the court system. The children whose interests our attorneys represent are the most vulnerable of our citizens, children who find themselves involved in the court system with no resources or ability to independently access justice. In 2013, our attorneys, known as Guardians *ad litem*, represented the best interest of nearly 17,500 children throughout the state in abuse and neglect, delinquency, paternity, truancy and high conflict domestic relations proceedings.

Our Guardians *ad litem* act as a critical check and balance on the system; the attorney's sole loyalty is to the best interests of the child. Our attorneys visit children in every placement and conduct a thorough and independent investigation into each child's circumstances. This requires expertise in a wide array of issues including child development, the impact of trauma on development, mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence and the services available through complex public systems to effectively address these issues. Additionally, our attorneys must be experts in pediatric law which is constantly evolving. Within the past year, we have had a number of Colorado Supreme Court decisions that directly impact the work we do on behalf of children. Those decisions have involved the rights of foster parents as well as the child's right to privileged communication with mental health treatment providers. Our agency has taken a leadership role in educating other professionals involved in children's cases about these decisions and how they affect children and families.

As an agency we are committed to providing best interests representation in the most efficient manner possible. Much of our work is focused on creating efficiencies through our attorney selection and evaluation process as well as in our trainings and support for our attorneys. Our web-based case management and billing system has enabled us to access real time data on attorney activity and case progress. We are making data-driven decisions and tracking results by jurisdiction, courtroom and individual attorney on issues such as length of time in foster care, number of moves while in care and the ultimate resolution of a child's case. In addition, we published and distributed Colorado's first comprehensive practice manual containing legal standards governing dependency and neglect cases.

While we strive as an agency to better serve Colorado's children, our work would not be possible without the incredibly talented hard-working attorneys across Colorado who serve as Guardians *ad litem*. Those attorneys are under paid and over worked, yet they continue to stand up each and every day to provide the child with a strong voice in a complex system. Thank you to each and every one of them and to the members of the legislature for continuing to support their good work.

Sincerely,

Linda Weinerman, JD
Executive Director

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CHILD'S REPRESENTATIVE BOARD

The Colorado Supreme Court appoints the nine-member child's representative board (Board) in accordance with the requirements and qualifications found in Colorado Revised Statutes § 13-91-104(2). The Board must consist of three attorneys, three advocates for children in the court system, and three citizens. There must be no more than five members of one political party and six of the seven congressional districts must be represented on the Board. The Board serves without compensation and works cooperatively with OCR's Executive Director to provide fiscal oversight, participate in policy and funding decisions, and assist in GAL and CASA training, as needed. The diverse and experienced Board represents all seven congressional districts and has a balance of Republican and Democratic members.

Terraine Bailey, Democrat, Sixth Congressional District, *GAL Attorney, Denver County, Attorney*

Marsha Caplan, Democrat, Second Congressional District, former *Executive Director, Voices for Children CASA, Advocate*

Paul Garcia, Democrat, Seventh Congressional District, *Dean of Adams City High School, Citizen*

Lynne Hufnagel, Democrat, First Congressional District, *Retired Denver District Court Judge, Attorney*

Laura Hunt, Republican, Fourth Congressional District, *former Executive Director, Larimer County Child Advocacy Center, Advocate*

Senator Cheri Jahn, Democrat, Seventh Congressional District, *Owner, Colorado Housekeeping & Home Care Services, Citizen*

Peggy Rudden, Republican, Sixth Congressional District, *Executive Director, CASA Advocates for Children, Advocate*

Joseph Wallis, Republican, Fifth Congressional District, *GAL Attorney, El Paso County, Attorney*

(Former) Senator Al White, Republican, Third Congressional District, *Director, Colorado Tourism Office, Citizen*

Ms. Victoria Black, non-voting Youth Advisory member. Although not statutorily required, the Board includes a non-voting youth advisory member. The youth advisory member is a former beneficiary of GAL services.

OCR STAFF

Linda Weinerman, Executive Director

Sheri Danz, Deputy Director

Amanda Donnelly, Staff Attorney

Dorothy Macias, Staff Attorney &
Legislative Liaison

Elisabeth Dickinson, Controller/Budget Officer

Rebecca Garrison, Systems Design/Administrative Assistant

Katie Irwin, Staff Accountant

Melanie Jannicelli, Attorney Reimbursement & Human Resources Manager

Ashlee Jones, Training Coordinator



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OVERVIEW

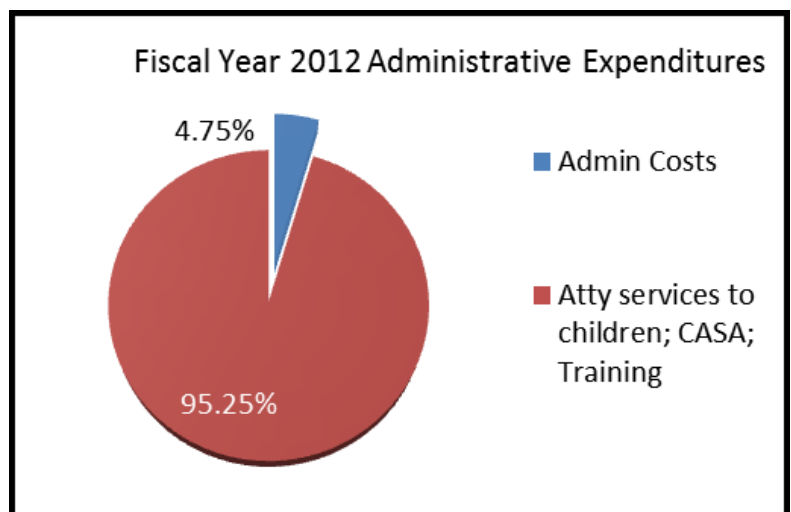
The **Office of the Child’s Representative (OCR)** is the state agency mandated to provide competent and effective best interests legal representation to children involved in the Colorado court system. OCR was created by the General Assembly in 2000 to improve representation for Colorado’s most vulnerable children by establishing minimum practice standards and providing litigation support, accessible high-quality statewide training, and oversight of the practice. The OCR oversees attorneys that provide legal representation as guardians *ad litem* (GAL), counsel for children in dependency and neglect proceedings, child legal representatives (CLR), as well as attorneys appointed to serve as state-paid Child and Family Investigators (CFI).

OCR serves children who have been abused and neglected, impacted by high-conflict domestic relations disputes, or charged with delinquent acts and without a parent or guardian able to protect the children’s best interests during the proceedings. In addition, OCR serves children in truancy, paternity, criminal, and mental health proceedings. In Fiscal Year 2013 (FY 13), the OCR served nearly 17,500 children involved in dependency and neglect, delinquency, truancy, probate, and high conflict divorce cases. At least 70.65% of these children are victims of serious child maltreatment and neglect and require representation throughout the court proceeding. Many of these children have multiple cases and have been removed from their family home and spend time in foster care.

OCR Mission Statement: The mission of the Office of the Child’s Representative (OCR) is to provide competent and effective legal representation to Colorado’s children involved in the court system because they have been abused and neglected, impacted by high conflict parenting time disputes, or charged with delinquent acts and without a parent available to protect their best interests during the proceedings. As a state agency, the OCR is accountable to the State of Colorado to achieve this mission in the most cost-efficient manner without compromising the integrity of services or the safety and well-being of children. The OCR is committed to ensuring that children whose interests are represented by its contract attorneys, Colorado’s most vulnerable and marginalized population in the courts, receive the best legal services available to protect and promote their safety and well-being and have their voice heard throughout all aspects of a case.

Vision: Each Colorado child in need of an OCR attorney will receive comprehensive legal advocacy from a skilled attorney who has expertise in juvenile law and who will diligently, zealously, and effectively represent the child’s interests and promote the child’s safety, well-being, and voice throughout all aspects of the case. These services will be provided in a cost-effective manner.

OCR spends 95.25% of its budget on meeting its statutory mandates, primarily on attorney services for children through state employees in the Office of the Child’s Representative El Paso County Guardian *ad litem* Office (OCR El Paso GAL Office) and 264 independent contractors throughout the state. The remaining 4.75% of its budget is used to administer the agency, which consists of a staff of eight employees (7.5 FTE) in the Denver Office.



OCR staff oversees approximately 276 attorneys throughout the state. The OCR El Paso GAL Office employees 12 attorneys, five social work professionals/coordinators, and three support staff (18.5 FTE). OCR contracts with 264 attorneys throughout the state. These OCR attorneys are skilled in juvenile, criminal, domestic relations, and probate law and must have expertise in child development and medical, psychological, and social sciences. The attorneys often live and work in the same communities as the children and youth they serve. Depending upon the case to which the attorney is appointed, the attorneys are known as Guardians *ad litem* (GALs), counsel, Child Legal Representatives (CLRs), or Child and Family Investigators (CFIs). They provide attorney services at a rate of \$65 per hour. The average cost of an OCR case in FY 13 was \$1,162.00.

OCR maintains high expectations of its OCR El Paso GAL Office state employees and independent contractors. In addition to the professional standards governing all attorneys, OCR attorneys are held to standards set by Chief Justice Directives (CJD) 04-06, CJD 04-08, attorney contracts, and OCR's practice standards. GALs must independently and timely investigate the matters to which they are appointed, make recommendations that are in the best interests of the child, and advocate on the child's behalf. GALs must meet each child in each placement and communicate with the child and other parties throughout the case. Although the unique statutory responsibilities of a GAL/CLR do not set forth a traditional attorney-client relationship between the appointed attorney and the child, the client of the GAL/CLR is the best interests of the child. The GAL's/CLR's determination of the child's best interests must include consultation with the child in a developmentally appropriate manner.

“She really tries to get to know you. I trust her the most out of anyone involved in my case.

She is awesome.”
- A youth's feedback about an OCR attorney

OCR monitors attorney services throughout the year in a number of ways. The OCR sends annual surveys aimed at assessing GAL performance to stakeholders in all 22 judicial districts, including judicial officers, court facilitators, court administrators, active CASA agencies, department caseworkers, respondent parent counsel, department attorneys, and probation officers. Each year, the OCR Executive Director and attorney staff communicate with stakeholders in each of the 22 judicial districts to assess attorney services. The OCR monitors hourly billing statements submitted by attorneys to ensure that the work done on a case is adequate and state dollars are used for only allowable expenditures. The OCR conducts random audits of attorney work. The annual contract process serves as an effective method of monitoring attorney services. OCR expanded its evaluation of attorneys this year by conducting court observations and obtaining input from youth, parents/guardians, and caregivers in one-third of the state's judicial districts. OCR's complaint process is a means for stakeholders and community members to bring potential issues to the agency's attention. OCR thoroughly investigates every complaint it receives. The OCR has implemented corrective action, including termination of or not renewing attorney contracts with attorneys who have displayed a pattern of failing to meet OCR expectations, the requirements of CJD 04-06, and contractual obligations.

OCR is a resource to legislators by providing information and answering questions concerning children's issues. OCR welcomes comments and questions from legislators regarding GALs, legislation or specific issues concerning children or GALs in a legislator's community.

OCR's LEGISLATIVE MANDATES

OCR's legislative mandates are set forth in C.R.S. § 13-91-101, *et seq.* The mandates include:

- I. Provide oversight and improve quality of best interests attorney services and maintain consistency of best interests representation statewide.
- II. Establish minimum practice standards, duties and responsibilities for all attorneys representing children in judicial proceedings, including the investigation of maximum-caseload limitations for GALs.
- III. Provide litigation support to OCR attorneys.
- IV. Establish minimum training requirements and accessible high-quality training statewide for attorneys, judges, magistrates and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) volunteers.
- V. Establish fair and realistic compensation for state-appointed children's attorneys sufficient to retain high-quality, experience pediatric attorneys.
- VI. Assess and document the effectiveness of various models of representation.
- VII. Work with CASA to develop CASA offices in each county and enhance funding resources for CASA.



“I appreciate all that he has done for me. I know I wasn’t the easiest case or kid to work with. I just want to thank him for everything.”

*-A youth’s feedback about an
OCR attorney*

I. **Provide oversight and improve quality of best interests attorney services and maintain consistency of best interests representation statewide.**

The Executive Director, Deputy Director, staff attorneys, and office staff monitor attorney services in a number of ways. Each year, the OCR Executive Director and attorney staff meet or communicate with stakeholders in each of the 22 judicial districts to assess attorney services. In addition, OCR staff monitors contract attorney services by scrutinizing billing submittals, conducting an annual contract/evaluation process, investigating complaints, and assessing compliments and other feedback on attorney's work.

OCR's contract process serves as an effective method of monitoring attorney services and ensures that qualified attorneys provide consistent best interests legal representation for children throughout Colorado. The contract process also provides OCR with the ability to address systemic needs within each jurisdictional district, such as the need for additional or fewer attorneys, training requirements on specific issue(s), and general concerns within the system.

In FY 13, OCR improved its contract/evaluation process. OCR selected attorneys in one-third of the judicial districts for an extensive evaluation. The extensive evaluation consists of attorney's application information; interviews of children/youth, parents, and caregivers; court observations; writing sample assessments; expanded stakeholder feedback; and selected reports from OCR's case management and data system, OCR's Colorado Attorney Reimbursement Electronic System (CARES). OCR continues to require all attorneys, regardless of whether the district in which they practice was selected for review, to provide an Affidavit of Compliance with CJD 04-06, disclose professional disciplinary history, and verify his/her fulfillment of OCR training requirements, malpractice insurance requirements, and, if a CFI, good standing on the statewide CFI list. In FY 13, OCR received 80 renewal applications from attorneys in districts under evaluation, 139 verifications, and 60 new applications.

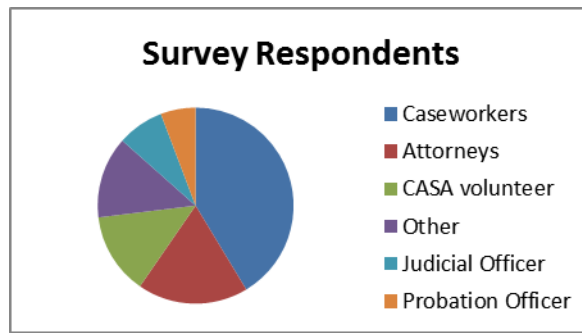
OCR's Executive Director and attorney staff endeavor to meet personally or by teleconference with contract attorneys, new applicants, judicial officers, court personnel, and CASA directors each year. In some instances, OCR attorney staff contacts county attorneys and county department of social services directors, as well as other community agencies involved in the protection of children to further discuss attorney performance, judicial concerns, jurisdictional trends, and potential training needs. At the completion of the judicial district contacts, OCR compiles its annual list of attorneys eligible for appointment in each judicial district, distributes it to judges and court staff within each judicial district by July 1st of each year, and subsequently prepares yearly contracts for attorneys on its list.

“She treated me like a human being. She did not look down on me for having a child in the system.”

- A parent's feedback about an OCR attorney

Annual Surveys. The OCR sends electronic surveys to judicial officers, court facilitators, court administrators, county of human services department (department) staff, respondent parent counsel, department attorneys, probation officers, and active CASA agencies in all 22 judicial districts. The electronic stakeholder survey consists of 25 questions aimed at assessing GAL performance. The survey seeks feedback on GAL knowledge, performance, participation in case conferencing, and general practice. The survey results allow OCR to review the competence of attorneys and quality of attorney services, as well as the validity of any concerns. OCR received 727

electronic survey responses, including responses from each judicial district, which provided feedback on approximately 191 guardians *ad litem*.



Stakeholder feedback is an important component of OCR’s assessment of GAL services and training needs. This year’s survey showed marked improvement in stakeholder assessment of GAL services. Highlights of the surveys are shown below:

Question answered (respondents were allowed to answer “Do Not Know”)	FY 12 Strongly Agree/ Agree	FY 13 Strongly Agree/Agree
GAL Possesses relevant skills	86%	91%
GAL possesses requisite knowledge	84%	90%
GAL familiar with community services	84%	89%
GAL attends all court hearings	91%	93%
GAL critically assesses department case plans & permanency plans	72%	90%
GAL is respectful of others involved in the case	82%	87%

Attorney billing submittals are scrutinized by OCR staff, controller, and, as needed, attorneys in order to ensure that the work done meets minimum standards and that state dollars are efficiently used for only allowable expenditures. OCR staff also conducts random audits of attorney billing throughout the year as OCR CARES provides staff with real-time access to attorney billing activity.

OCR attorney staff investigates complaints and assesses compliments of contract attorney’s work throughout the year. In FY 13, complaints against attorneys decreased by 33%. OCR attorney staff investigated 20 complaints in FY 13. Each complaint was thoroughly investigated by contacting the complainant and attorney, reviewing the court record of action and attorney billing submittals, and interviewing witnesses identified by both the complainant and the attorney. Five complaints were deemed “founded”; giving rise to an audit of the attorney’s work to determine whether the behavior was an anomaly in practice or part of a pattern of conduct. OCR has implemented corrective action, including terminating or not renewing attorney contracts with GALs who have displayed a pattern of failing to meet OCR expectations, the requirements of CJD 04-06, and contractual obligations.

II. Establish minimum practice standards, duties and responsibilities for all attorneys representing children in judicial proceedings, including the investigation of maximum-caseload limitations for GALs.

OCR maintains high expectations of its attorneys. In addition to the professional standards governing all attorneys, OCR attorneys are held to standards set by CJD 04-06 and 04-08, as applicable, OCR practice standards, and their contract with OCR. An OCR attorney appointed as GAL in a D&N must independently investigate matters, make recommendations to promote the safety, well-being, and best interests of the child, and advocate on the child's behalf. The GAL must meet each child client in every placement and continue to communicate with the child throughout the case. Usually, there is more than one child per case and the children are often placed in different homes or treatment facilities. The GAL must consult with each child in a developmentally appropriate manner and consider the child's position in formulating his/her determination of the child's best interests. The GAL must appear at all court hearings; attend ancillary hearings such as special education hearings or child support hearings; prepare for and litigate contested matters; and participate in out-of-court meetings concerning appropriate placement, treatment, and long-term planning for the child. The GAL must interview and maintain contact with other people involved in the child's life, including the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer if one is assigned to the case. The GAL is responsible for promoting the child's safety and well-being throughout the case and ensuring that the child is successfully placed in a safe, appropriate and permanent home.

OCR worked with the Chief Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court to revise Chief Justice Directive 04-06 in March 2013 to include appointments of counsel for children in dependency & neglects cases under OCR's oversight and payment responsibilities. The revision was done in part to provide children in D&N cases who have been determined of sufficient age and competent to hold their own patient-therapist privilege under *L.A.N. v. L.M.B.*, 11 SC 529 (Jan. 22, 2013). In addition, OCR assumed responsibility for appointments of counsel for children facing contempt citations in D&N proceedings.

OCR's Cornerstone Advocacy initiative, a modified version of New York's Center for Family Representation's Cornerstone Advocacy program, emphasizes proactive and intensive advocacy in D&N cases focused on four cornerstones:

- Frequent and meaningful visits,
- Placement arrangements supportive of family connections,
- Services tailored to the strengths and needs of children and parents,
- Education and transition planning supportive of academic and life success.

Cornerstone Advocacy provides a framework for a GAL's investigation and advocacy and is consistent with the Colorado Children's Code stated preference for in-home placement, preserving and strengthening family ties whenever possible, and timely resolution of cases in the best interests of children. See C.R.S. § 19-1.102(1). An assessment of Cornerstone Advocacy as implemented in New York City demonstrated that this model has resulted in significantly more children remaining in in-home placements, reduced time in foster care, and lower foster care reentry rates.

The Guided Reference in Dependency (GRID), as will be discussed in more detail below, integrates Cornerstone Advocacy principles into its hearings checklists and advocacy tips, providing another concrete and useful tool supportive of this initiative.

OCR continues to assess the establishment of caseload limitations. OCR's pilot multidisciplinary office program, which has implemented caseload limits, OCR CARES case data management system, and analysis of

fiscal impact of case caps, will inform its assessment of caseload limits. OCR monitors individual attorney caseloads through the use of the OCR CARES data system (formerly known as KIDS) and plans to develop a formalized process of determining whether to implement caseload limitations of all independent contractors.

III. Provide litigation support to the practice of OCR attorneys.

The OCR believes serving as a resource to attorneys is a critical part of its mission to improve the quality of best interests representation. Attorneys are welcome to contact the Executive Director and attorney staff for assistance. The OCR serves as a resource and offers support to its contract attorneys on a daily basis in a number of ways.

Response to individual inquiries by contract attorneys. Attorneys frequently contact the Executive Director and staff attorneys for assistance with legal issues present in their trial court and appellate cases. OCR provides litigation support, legal references and research, and expert resources to attorneys. OCR assists contract attorneys by providing legal information and guiding them to relevant statutory and case law, appropriate professionals, written materials, and other resources. In addition, OCR staff assists attorneys with billing questions and issues.

OCR updates. OCR provides timely electronic notice of recent federal and state court decisions and legislative changes that pertain to the representation of the best interests of children, trainings, and current events involving child welfare issues. OCR keeps attorneys apprised of legal issues under consideration by state and national practitioners.

OCR Newsletter. The OCR publishes a quarterly newsletter containing a review of case law and legislation, policy updates, training resources, and a variety of hot topics in the legal and child welfare arena.

The OCR listserv. OCR attorneys are required to subscribe to the OCR listserv. The listserv is a forum for contract attorneys to ask questions about any aspect of their case, from information about a particular child placement agency or service provider to technical legal issues pending before the court. OCR also uses the listserv to communicate new case processes and inform contractors of developments in the field. The listserv is limited to attorneys who contract with OCR.

The OCR website. OCR's website contains information about OCR, an Attorney Center that maintains an active motions bank for OCR attorneys, and a resource center. OCR attorneys may also easily access OCR's billing policies and procedures on its website. The website also publishes links to national organizations and resources for use by the general public. OCR is currently migrating its website to a new host in order to improve its capacity and functionality.

IV. Establish minimum training requirements and provide accessible training statewide for attorneys, judges, magistrates, and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) volunteers.

OCR recognizes that training for the attorneys is a critical component to enhancing the provision of legal services to children. A child-sensitive legal system depends upon a bench and bar of considerable sophistication and competence in not only the law but on issues unique to children. Attorneys representing children must draw upon interdisciplinary knowledge from such pertinent fields as psychology, sociology, so-

cial work, and medicine. Children are best served by legal practitioners in the child welfare system when judges and attorneys understand the social and psychological implications of a case, as well the impact of the developmental level and unique needs of each child.

OCR maintains stringent training requirements. OCR attorneys are contractually obligated to participate in a minimum of 10 hours of OCR sponsored training each year. This fiscal year, OCR offered 70.25 hours of training throughout the state. OCR recorded and then posted its trainings on the OCR website to ensure that training could be easily accessed at any time thereafter by those attorneys and other stakeholders who could not attend or need to refer back to the training.

To further expand training opportunities, the OCR continued its collaboration with the Colorado Department of Human Services to provide Continuing Legal Education credits for OCR attorneys who completed courses through the Colorado Child Welfare Training Academy (Academy). The Academy was being utilized by department caseworkers only, but this partnership has proven to be an efficient use of State resources as many of the in-person and computer-based trainings are applicable to both caseworkers and GALs. In addition, OCR attorneys are able to access the Academy's online student tracking system, which keeps track of the courses each student has completed.

Listed below are some of the major trainings that the OCR has participated in or sponsored over the last year.

- Colorado GAL Educational Forum on Permanency Roundtables (9/27/12)
- Getting on the GRID: Hot Topics and Emerging Issues in Dependency Law (10/18/12 & 10/19/12)
- MDLO Training: Personality and Team Dynamics (11/9/12 & 11/30/12)
- The OCR's Complaint Process & Procedures (1/16/13)
- Lay of the L.A.N. Stakeholder Meetings
 - Adams County 2/20/13
 - Denver County 2/21/13
 - El Paso County 2/27/13
 - Adams County – Broomfield 3/5/13
 - Morgan County 3/6/13
 - Arapahoe County 3/12/13
 - Jefferson County 3/13/13
 - Boulder County 4/2/13
- OCR Contract Renewal & Application Webinar 3/26/13
- OCR Domestic Relations Conference (4/18/13 & 4/19/13)
- The Lay of the L.A.N. Practical & Ethical Issues Webinar (4/30/13)

OCR's Executive Director and attorney staff also trained other professionals, stakeholders, and court personnel throughout FY 13. OCR spoke at the following conferences and trainings:

- Role of GAL presentation at Colorado Foster Parent Association Meeting (10/4/12)
- Presentation to Judiciary Committee (1/15/13)
- LAN presentation to Collaboration in 2013



and Beyond (2/11/13)

- LAN presentation to Colorado Department of Human Services (3/19/13)
- Inspiration Junkies presentation to foster youth (3/21/13)
- Presentation on OCR to Colorado Bar Leadership Committee (3/22/13)
- LAN presentation to attorney participants at Best Practice Court Convening (4/17/13)
- Collaborative LAN training Cleo Wallace Residential Care (4/24/13)
- Presentation to CASA Directors re State of the OCR (4/28/13)
- LAN panel presentation to county attorneys at County Attorney Conference (6/7/13)

V. Establish fair and realistic compensation for state-appointed children’s attorneys sufficient to retain high-quality, experienced pediatric attorneys.

OCR’s legislative mandate includes establishing fair and realistic compensation for contract attorneys, with the goal of adequately paying attorneys for the work they perform. OCR inherited a flat rate pay system at its formation. With General Assembly support, OCR transitioned the payment structure to hourly billing. The hourly fee limit has been set at \$65/hour over the course of several legislative sessions and was planned to reach \$72/hour by FY 12. Due to the budget crisis, OCR has not pursued a raise for court appointed attorneys during past fiscal years, but notes that the Joint Budget Committee historically supports the hourly rate and recognizes that the attorneys who are paid the state rate earn substantially less than attorneys in the private sector.

“I have never had a GAL that would fight so much for my kids. She is there for the kids. She has gone the extra mile. I am thrilled to have her as a GAL. If only we could clone her.”
- A caregiver’s feedback about an OCR attorney

VI. Assess and document the effectiveness of various models of legal service provision.

OCR provides attorney services to Colorado’s children by employing three models of representation: by contracting with independent contractors, hiring state employees in one judicial district, and contracting with pilot multidisciplinary offices in two judicial districts.

1. **Independent contractors** continue to provide children legal services in each judicial district. In FY 13, OCR contracted with approximately 264 attorneys throughout the state. Contract attorneys are small business owners within their communities. Many lease office space and employ other members of the community in which they practice. This model is the historical means of providing best interests representation in Colorado.
2. **The Office of the Child’s Representative El Paso County Guardian *ad litem* Office (OCR El Paso GAL Office)** in the 4th Judicial District is a multidisciplinary office staffed by state employees that falls under the oversight of the OCR. OCR’s El Paso GAL Office provides legal services in an approach similar to the manner in which a local Public Defender’s office provides attorney services. The office was created in December 1999 in response to Senate Bill 99-215 footnote 135 which directed the Judicial Department to pilot alternative methods of providing GAL services. The goal of this program was to determine whether higher quality services could be provided through a staff model at the same or less cost as the then-existing attorney payment process (contract/hourly billing model).

OCR inherited the pilot at its inception and has continued the program.

The OCR's El Paso GAL Office operates as a multidisciplinary public law firm and employs 12 attorneys, five social work professions known as case coordinators, and three support staff (18.5 FTE). The case coordinators have a social work or related background and make a significant contribution to the legal representation of children by assisting attorneys in their analyses of treatment needs, participating in case meetings, communicating with treatment providers, reviewing psycho-social assessments, and observing visits between parents and their children.

The National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) has endorsed dedicated children's law offices as one of the best models for delivery of high-quality legal services. Moreover, members of the El Paso child welfare community and court system have commented on the significant improvements in GAL representation as a direct result of the OCR El Paso GAL office. The OCR El Paso GAL Office is included in the multidisciplinary law office evaluation underway, as detailed below.

3. **OCR's Multidisciplinary law office pilot project.** In 2003, the General Assembly instructed OCR in SB 03-258 footnote 118 to study alternative methods of providing GAL services in dependency and neglect cases, specifically whether OCR could implement a multidisciplinary office in Denver similar to the OCR El Paso GAL Office. Creating a state office in Denver appeared cost prohibited and so in May 2010, the OCR issued a Request for Proposals for the creation of multidisciplinary law offices in two of its high volume jurisdictions, Denver and Arapahoe counties. In January 2011, the OCR contracted with three such offices to implement a multidisciplinary approach to GAL services in those two counties.

OCR established the multidisciplinary law offices as a 30-month pilot project from January 1, 2011 through June 30, 2013. The offices are staffed by attorneys and social service professionals with the goal of providing innovative and efficient GAL services resulting in better outcomes for children. Attorneys make use of social service professionals to supplement attorney services in a number of ways, including analyzing treatment needs, participating in treatment meetings, communicating with treatment providers, and augmenting attorney interactions with children and their families. In addition to implementing a multidisciplinary approach to cases, the offices operate under enhanced practice standards, supervision, and accountability expectations.

“She says that she is on my side and she really throws my opinion out there and advocates for me.”

- A caregiver's feedback about an OCR attorney

In FY 13, the OCR partnered with the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work to begin the evaluation of the effectiveness of the multidisciplinary law office as a model of delivering legal services to children in juvenile court proceedings. The DU study focused on understanding how the multidisciplinary law offices function and whether this model has enhanced GAL practice in Arapahoe, Denver, and El Paso counties. Five student groups conducted the study during the last school year. In fall 2012, students under the direction of faculty, developed evaluation plans; in winter 2012, the students collected data; and in spring 2013, the students ana-

lyzed the data. Data collection was through many sources, including web-based surveys, telephone interviews, focus groups, OCR CARES reports, and Court observations. The students sought feedback from youth who received legal services by utilizing phone interviews and mailed surveys.

Initial results indicate that MDLO legal services cost less at their flat fee than if they had been paid for the same hours at the \$65 hourly rate; further analysis is needed to determine how the time is spent and whether the increased time is benefiting children. Few conclusions can be drawn based on the DU study; therefore OCR has extended the program to the end of FY 14 in order to continue its assessment.

VII. Support Colorado Court Appointed Special Advocates in the development of programs in each county and enhance funding resources.

While GALs are the child’s legal advocate and parties to D&N cases, community volunteers, known as CASAs, are appointed in 16 of Colorado’s 22 judicial districts by the court to serve as a support to children and their families and provide helpful information to the GAL and court. The different roles of and collaboration between GALs and CASAs are best illustrated by the following case:

Five children ages six – 10 were adjudicated dependent and neglected by their parents. The children were placed in separate foster homes in Pueblo, Payton, Denver metro, and Conifer due to their special needs. Each child informed her/his GAL that s/he wanted to remain in contact with her/his siblings. The GAL for the oldest child was able to overcome the department’s claim that sibling contact and visits were not appropriate due to the children’s “behaviors” and obtained a court order to require contact and visits. The CASA advocate has implemented the court order by arranging sibling activities and coordinating transportation, often driving the children herself.

Although each local CASA program is unique, similarities do exist. The CASA’s role is outlined in § 19-1-201, C.R.S. *et. seq.* CASA volunteers must meet minimum requirements, pass background checks, and successfully complete a mandatory 30 or 40-hour training program based on the curriculum created by the National CASA Association. Local CASA programs also require 12 hours of additional annual training. Most CASA volunteers concentrate their service on one family at a time. Typically, volunteers must commit to 1 year of service or for the duration of a case, whichever is longer. Voices for Children, the Boulder County CASA Office, has over 100 community volunteers, at least 20% of which have served abused and neglected children 5 years or longer. In addition, local programs often require a minimum monthly time commitment from their volunteers. CASA Advocates for Children in the 18th Judicial District requires volunteers to provide 10 hours of service monthly and maintain weekly contact with the children they serve.

“I think we pretty much told you she rocks, I felt very secure, and I felt very secure even before we even dreamed that we could have adopted [the child]. I mean, she was just very honest and it was just really nice to have somebody whose interests were for the child.”

- A caregiver’s feedback about an OCR attorney

OCR attorneys and CASA volunteers work collaboratively to advance the best interests of children. CASA volunteers provide written reports to the court and parties. CASAs participate in case meetings, help address educational issues, conduct supervised visits, support sibling visits, and provide transportation for parents and children. CASAs also establish supportive relationships with children, parents, and relatives or kin. CASA volunteers are able to bring joy to the children they serve by participating in fun activities with them such as bowling, attending movies, and shopping; these activities are funded by the CASA volunteer.

In FY 13, Colorado CASA received \$520,000 from the State of Colorado as a line item in the OCR Budget. Of this amount, \$70,000 was used by the state office for general program support, with the remaining \$450,000 passed through to the 16 CASA programs across the state. In FY 13, 1,691 volunteers donated 140,119 hours and served 3,829 children, of which 1,745 of these children were new appointments. CASA programs trained 500 new volunteers this fiscal year. Since 2008, CASA programs have seen a 39 percent increase in the number of volunteers trained and have served 46 percent more children.

2013 INNOVATIONS TO OCR PROVISION OF LEGAL SERVICES

I. OCR's Data Management and Billing System now known as OCR CARES

OCR requires all attorneys, including members of the multidisciplinary law office program, to input case information and data for each appointment. Information includes home visits, phone calls, meetings, document preparation, court hearing dates and outcomes, and placement moves. OCR CARES allows for information sharing between attorneys, paralegals, social workers, and supervisors on each case. Additionally, the OCR has access to case information, except attorney work product, in order to confirm compliance with the requirements set forth in CJD 04-06, provide enhanced oversight, and track trends for each jurisdiction and the state.

In FY 13, OCR acquired the source code to the AnyCase/KidsVoice on-line case management system in order to enhance its use as a billing system and oversight tool. OCR anticipates that its planned enhancements to the system will create efficiencies for both attorney users and OCR staff in processing attorney bills and providing oversight of the practice.

“At one staffing, she told everyone that she did not want me in a high level placement. She tried her hardest to get me out and she succeeded.”

- A youth's feedback about an OCR attorney

II. Dependency and Neglect Advocacy Guide known as The Guided Reference in Dependency (GRID)

A longstanding goal of the OCR has been to develop a comprehensive advocacy guide for GALs. The OCR secured Children's Justice Act funds to publish such a guide in Fiscal Year 2013. The OCR collaborated with Colorado's Court Improvement Program (CIP) to include parents' counsel in the group of attorneys to whom this guide will apply. OCR attorney staff coordinated the writing, editing, and publishing of the GRID and the Deputy Director served as primary content editor.

The GRID serves as a state and federal law reference for GALs, respondent parent counsel, county attorneys, and judicial officers. The guide covers the main hearings that occur in D&N cases, detailing the black letter law (statutes and seminal cases) governing the hearings and containing checklists and practice tips for GALs and parents' counsel. The checklists consist of a list of activities and considerations that each attorney should engage in prior to, during, and after each hearing type. Fact sheets highlight key aspects of issues that arise in D&N cases but that are not unique to a particular hearing (e.g., educational stability, sibling connections, ICWA, involving youth in court). Quick reference is facilitated by the use of tabs, a user-friendly formatting system, and an extensive index; the relatively small size of the book (although it contains approximately 500 pages, it is approximately the size of a Colorado statute's book) furthers its ease of use for attorneys in court. In fall 2012, OCR distributed physical copies to all GALs and respondent parent counsel, as well as judicial officers and county attorneys. The GRID is posted on line. This OCR project is modeled after the California Dependency Quick Guide.

Because the GRID serves as Colorado's first comprehensive integration of the legal standards governing dependency and neglect cases with best and promising attorney practices, it is a significant step in improving the practice of GALs in Colorado. Its publication and dissemination allows the OCR to assume a higher level of base knowledge and core practice for all GALs representing the interests of children in Colorado's courts. The GRID has created efficiencies in practice and is seen in every dependency and neglect courtroom in the state.

III. National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) Child Welfare Law Certification Program

The NACC is a non-profit child advocacy and membership organization “dedicated to providing high-quality legal representation for children.” The NACC has developed a child welfare law certification program in which an attorney who has demonstrated substantial and satisfactory involvement in child welfare law and passed a national child welfare law exam can be certified as a Child Welfare Law Specialist. In 2009, NACC Certification as a Child Welfare Law

Specialist became available in Colorado. OCR supported the NACC's efforts to make certification available. Attorneys interested in becoming certified traditionally must pay a \$300 application fee and a \$300 examination fee, making this endeavor cost-prohibitive for some GALs. In 2011, the U.S. Children's Bureau National Quality Improvement Center on the Representation of Children in the Child Welfare System supported the NACC in waiving some of the costs associated with certification, enabling more attorneys to pursue certification as a Child Welfare Law Specialist. The OCR believes the option of certification serves as yet another means of elevating the practice of juvenile law. Colorado now has 25 NACC certified Child Welfare Law Specialists, including two members of the OCR attorney staff. Several OCR attorneys are pursuing certification as Child Welfare Law Specialists during the NACC's current certification cycle.

IV. Monitoring and Involvement in Court of Appeals and Supreme Court Cases

OCR attorney staff weekly monitor decisions published by appellate courts, particularly the Colorado Court of Appeals and the Colorado Supreme Court, and keeps its contract attorneys apprised of significant appellate decisions impacting their GAL/CLR practice. Additionally, OCR occasionally weighs in as *amicus curiae* on Colorado Supreme Court cases that may have significant implications for attorneys and the children/youth they represent. Participation as *amicus*, also referred to as "friend of the court," allows a non-party to the case to weigh in on the case's policy or other implications. The court must grant permission to participate as *amicus*. The cases on which the OCR has participated as *amicus* have significant policy implications for GALs and juvenile law practitioners.

During FY 13, the OCR *amicus* activity focused on two matters pending before the Colorado Supreme Court. At issue in 11 SC 725, *In the Interest of A.C.*, was whether pre-adoptive foster parents of a child whose biological parents' rights have been terminated have a constitutionally protected liberty interest in a continuing relationship with the child and a right to due process concerning removal of the child from the foster parents' home. At issue in *In the Interest of L.A.N. a/k/a L.A.C.*, 11 SC 529, was whether the court of appeals erred in determining that the child's psychotherapist-patient privilege was waived with respect to certain materials in the psychotherapist's file and whether a guardian ad litem in a dependency and neglect proceeding can waive the child's psychotherapist-patient privilege.

"He is not one of those people on a power trip that want to beat you up. He just wants to understand the facts and deal with them. He's good to have in the system, from a lot of the others I've met, he's good to have."

- A parent's feedback about an OCR attorney

The Colorado Supreme Court held oral argument in *A.C.* on June 7, 2012. The OCR argued the creation of a constitutionally protected liberty interest of pre-adoptive foster parent's desire for a continuing relationship with the child infringes upon the foster child's statutory rights established in the Children's Code and diverts the focus of the proceedings from the best interests of the child. The Court agreed with OCR in its opinion announced on June 10, 2013.

Oral argument in *L.A.N.* occurred in October 2012. Although an extensive body of case law existed in Colorado regarding the therapist-patient privilege

set forth in § 13-90-107(1)(g), there was little direct guidance on who should be able to invoke or waive the privilege on behalf of a child in a dependency and neglect proceeding. Resolution of the issues presented for review required consideration of the privacy interests of children, the purpose of dependency and neglect proceedings, and the unique role and responsibilities of GALs in such proceedings. *L.A.N.* presented an opportunity to clarify the privacy interests of children in dependency and neglect proceedings and the role of the GAL in preserving those privacy interests.

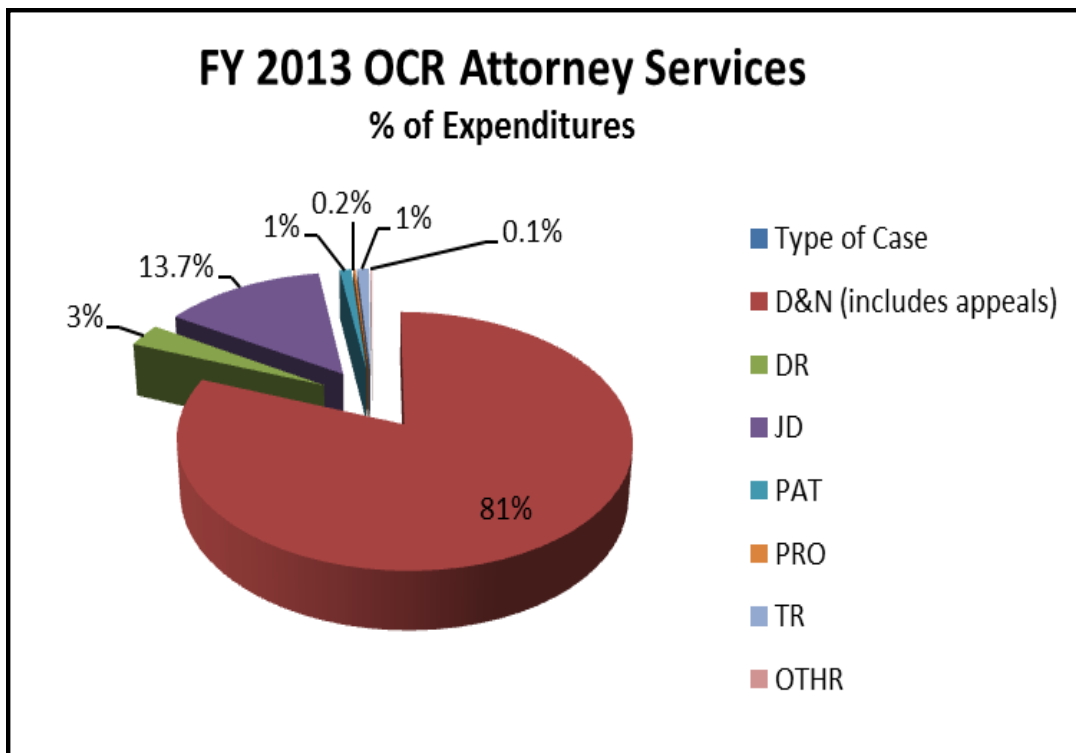
In January, 2013, the Supreme Court announced its decision supporting children's privacy interest in therapeutic communications and OCR took the lead in announcing and training on the decision to GALs, judicial officers, parent's counsel, and county attorneys.

OVERVIEW OF OCR BUDGET

One of the OCR's mandates is to enhance funding to promote effective legal advocacy. Given the state of Colorado's FY 13 budget, the OCR continued its focus on creating efficiencies and securing basic funding to meet the need for attorney services. The following is an overview of the OCR budget and an outline of factors that contribute to the budget.

Summary of Appropriations: In FY 13, the OCR spent 4.75% of its budget on its central administrative office, which is dedicated to fulfilling OCR's statutory mandates. \$17,657,295 was spent on attorney services for children. \$520,000 was passed directly through to CASA of Colorado. OCR used \$38,000 of its budget to providing training to GALs and other stakeholders throughout Colorado.

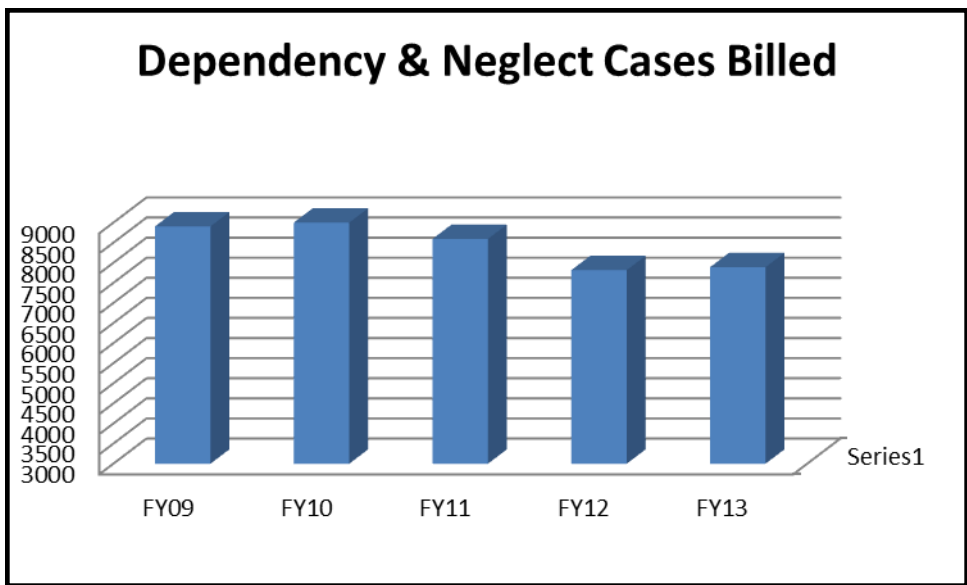
Breakdown of the Mandated Attorney Services Provided by OCR: OCR attorneys represent the best interests of children in dependency and neglect, delinquency, domestic relations, truancy, paternity and probate. In FY 13, the OCR paid attorney services in 13,778 case appointments, a 6% increase over FY 12 appointments. The average cost of an OCR case was \$1,162 in FY 13. The appointments in dependency and neglect cases, including appeals in those cases, account for 81% of attorney services expenditures. The breakdown of expenditures by case type is in the chart below.



The OCR saw a 6% increase in appointments from the previous fiscal year; domestic relations appointments increased by 27.73% and truancy appointments increased by 63.63%. The breakdown of appointments over the last five fiscal years is shown in the table below.

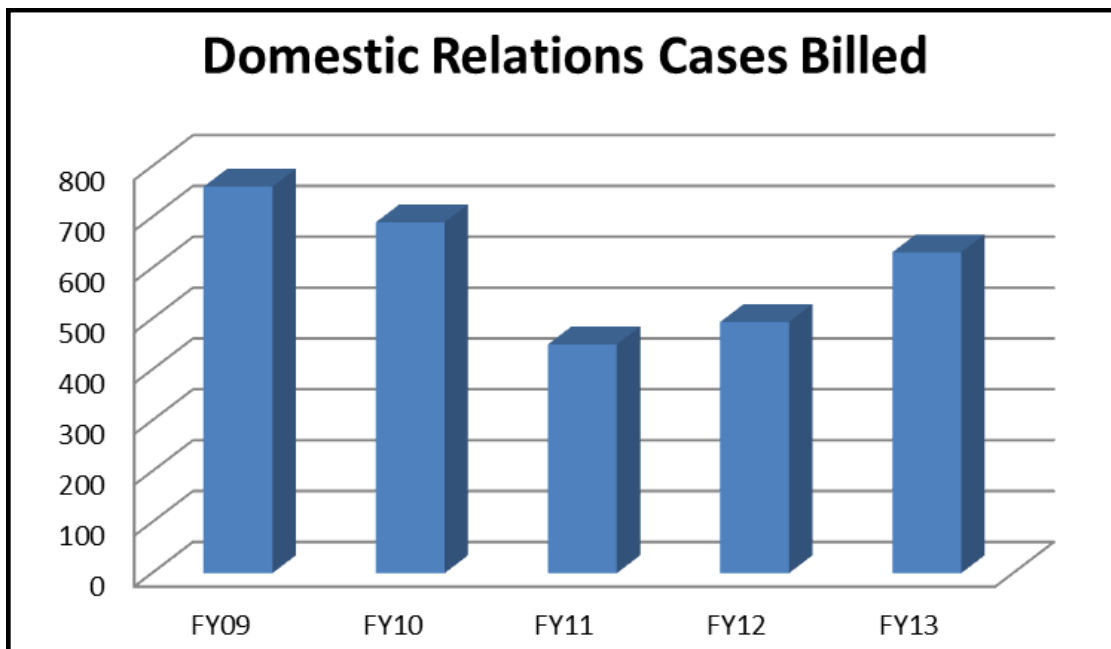
Type of Case	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13
Dependency & Neglect	8,906	9,038	8,594	7,817	7,890
Juvenile Delinquency	4,423	4,299	3,903	3,846	4,118
Domestic Relations	760	690	450	494	631
Truancy	475	406	416	426	697
Paternity	138	198	146	159	187
Probate	71	64	79	61	62
Other	70	99	68	184	193
Total	14,843	14,794	13,656	12,987	13,778

Dependency and Neglect. The OCR experienced an increase in dependency and neglect costs, although D&N expenditures still account for 81% of attorney expenditures. The average cost per dependency and neglect cases was \$1,627.00 in FY 13; a 5.9% increase in the average cost per dependency and neglect case in FY 12 of \$1,536.00. The increase in per case billing costs may be attributed several factors, including the *L.A.N.* decision and fewer resources for families and increased caseloads for social services staff which require additional attorney time to successfully resolve cases.

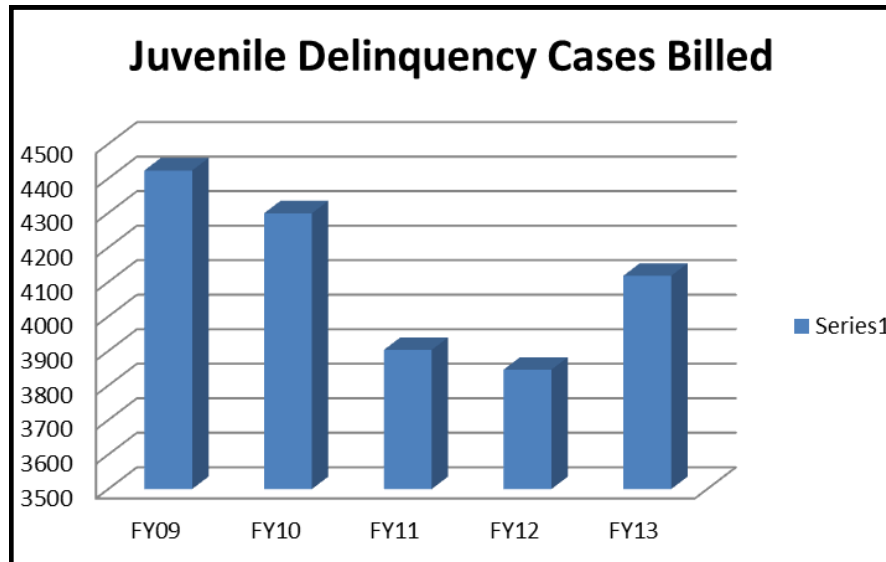


Domestic Relations Cases. Indigent parties in domestic relations matters may seek court appointment of a state-paid Child’s Legal Representative (CLR) and attorney Child and Family Investigator (CFI). A CLR is appointed to represent the child(ren)’s best interests. The CFI is appointed to investigate a matter pending before the court, provides a report to the court, and may be called as a witness. The attorneys appointed in either role are subject to OCR oversight and comprise the OCR DR appointments. Domestic relations appointments of OCR attorneys increased by 27.7% in FY 13, with 631 appointments in FY 13 compared to 494 appointments billed in FY 12. In FY 13, the OCR incurred a slight decrease in the average cost of appointments of \$759.00 compared to \$826.00 in FY 12 as the OCR continued to promote efficiencies in practice.

The ENA pilot program in Adams County has proven to be a cost effective measure. This pilot program is similar to mediation in that the parties work with an attorney and a therapist prior to court in order to work out any differences in such matters as parenting time and visitation. In FY 13, 16 Adams County cases qualified for participation in the ENA program as opposed to ten in Adams County in FY 12. The total cost of the Adams County ENA program was \$6,663.00 in FY 13 while 44 traditional CFI appointments in Adams County cost \$35,798.00. In light of the ENA program’s apparent cost-savings, OCR agreed to expand the program to Denver County in April 2012 and 33 cases qualified for participation. The total cost of the Denver ENA program was \$15,852.00 while the cost of traditional CFI appointments in Denver was \$108,583.00. The OCR continues to evaluate the efficacy of the ENA program



Juvenile Delinquency. FY 13 continued the trend of increased JD costs, with an increase in cost per case of \$30. This average cost per case, \$532 in FY 13, however, is less than the average cost per case in FY 09 of \$628. The OCR continues to train judicial staff and attorneys on the requirements of SB 09-268, which amended C.R.S. § 19-1-111 to clarify that GALs are only appointed in certain instances in delinquency matters: if a parent is not present, if there is a conflict of interest between the child and parent, and emphasizing that appointment must be in the best interests of the child. Also, the OCR continues to emphasize that the GAL must not remain on the case indefinitely and the GAL’s appointment terminates upon sentencing when the child is returned home.



Other factors driving the OCR budget

Several other factors drive the OCR budget. In FY 13, the OCR saw a marked increase in appellate case filings/billings. In FY 13, 148 cases were billed in the Court of Appeals and 14 cases, a 250% increase over last year, were pending before the Supreme Court. The OCR requires its attorneys to participate in appellate matters and provides litigation support and, if necessary, substitute appellate attorneys for those trial attorneys unable to actively engage in appellate practice. The *L.A.N.* decision resulted in GALs accessing each of their cases in order to determine its applicability and appropriate resulting advocacy/litigation strategy. It continues to be the case that GALs are doing more initial advocacy to seek services for children and families. Also, as there is a lack of available service providers, GALs have increased the litigation of matters such as placements and appropriate treatment. If treatment is not available for parents and children, the goal of reunification is threatened and the duration of out of home placement increases, thereby increasing costs to the state. As one GAL notes, “The cases are more complex. Not only am I an attorney who must file motions and litigate issues, but I have to understand the treatments available to children and families, substance abuse and mental health issues, and the psychological ramifications of physical and sexual abuse. I am doing more and more casework as the department of social services is short staffed.” In addition, department initiatives often create need for attorney participation at additional meetings and staffings.

Appendix A

OCR Legislative Review

HRJ 1019: Juvenile Right to Counsel

The joint resolution creates a 2013 interim committee to study the role of legal defense counsel in the juvenile justice system. The committee, which includes a member of the OCR, will study issues concerning juvenile justice, including, the scope of right to counsel, methods for improving professionalism in the practice of juvenile defense, and comparing the role of defense counsel with the role of the guardian *ad litem*.

HB 1082: Expunging Juvenile Delinquency Records

Clarifies the initiation of expungement proceedings concerning juvenile records, including allowing the GAL to file a motion to expunge such records.

HB 1243 Court Orders for Parenting Time Findings of Fact

The bill requires a court restricting parenting time based upon a finding that parenting time would endanger the child's physical health or significantly impair the child's physical health or significantly impair the child's emotional development to specify in its order the specific findings supporting the restriction on parenting time.

HB 1254 Restorative Justice

The bill creates a pilot project for restorative justice programs for juveniles in four judicial districts and requires a report on all existing programs be made to the legislature by January 31, 2014.

HB 1259 Civil Actions Protection Orders & Domestic Orders

The bill amends several provisions of law relating to civil actions and orders in Titles 13 and 14, including adding rights of children with respect to the determination of parenting time, requiring certain procedures in actions where a claim of child abuse or neglect or domestic violence has been made to the court, and listing factors the court shall consider in determining whether to order a parenting time evaluation.

HB 1271 Child Abuse Reporting Hotline & Child Welfare Rules

The bill authorizes the creation of a child abuse reporting hotline system as an "opt in" for counties. Currently, each of the 64 counties has its own telephone number(s) and after-hour process of receiving child abuse reports. The hotline system will permit any citizen in the state to use a uniform number/web portal to connect to the correct department or agency responsible for responding to that specific report. The county department retains screening and assessment responsibilities. A Department of Human Services steering committee will develop an implementation plan and provide recommendations to the DHS Executive Director regarding the hotline.

SB 047 Concerning Protections for Youth in Foster Care Against Identity Theft

The bill revises CRS § 19-7-102 in order to comply with federal law by including youth in the custody of the division of youth corrections or a state mental hospital, expanding the age of youth entitled to a credit report check, and requiring the state or county department to obtain annual credit reports rather than a single report.

SB 255: Statutory Changes to Child Fatality review Teams

The responsibilities of and reporting by child fatality review teams in both the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) and Department of Human Services (DHS) are clarified.

Appendix B

OCR COMMITTEE WORK

Successful advocacy for children is often the result of collaboration and the sharing of resources among many state agencies and child advocate organizations. The following is a list of OCR committee involvement either as member or chairperson.

Supreme Court Family Issues Committee and Other Professionals Standing Subcommittee: This committee was established by the Supreme Court, as a result of the recommendations of the Colorado Supreme Court Commission on Families. The Executive Director serves on this committee.

The Child Welfare Training Steering Committee: A newly formed committee of the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), county departments, and stakeholders working to redesign Colorado state training models for social workers and supervisors to help improve outcomes for children and families. The Executive Director and Training Coordinator serve on this committee.

CDHS'S Child Welfare Executive Leadership Council: The council brings together executive leaders in child abuse prevention and protective services from across Colorado to provide advice and counsel to CDHS on matters related to protecting vulnerable children and advancing our child protective services system. The Executive director serves on this council.

The Child Welfare Strategy Group: This group is sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Center for Effective Services and System. The group is working on identifying and implementing strategies to advance permanency for older youth in Colorado. The Executive Director is a member of the Sponsor Group.

Colorado Child Fatality Prevention Review Team: This is a state-wide multidisciplinary team that examines every child death in Colorado. The committee is charged with compiling statistical analysis, trends and recommendations to reduce child fatalities. The Deputy Director serves on this committee.

Court Improvement Committee: OCR is a member of the Colorado Court Improvement Committee, serving as an ex-officio member without voting rights. The CIC focuses on improving the justice system for children, especially children in dependency and neglect cases. Specifically, the CIC oversees the federal grant given to each state that is to be utilized to improve the Dependency Court System.

Training Subcommittee of the Court Improvement Committee: This subcommittee was established in the beginning of 2007, and the purpose of the committee is to develop a multi-disciplinary training curriculum with CDHS, judges, county attorneys, GALs, Respondent Parent's Counsel and other stakeholders.

Domestic Violence in Domestic Relations Task Force: This committee focuses on the impact domestic violence has in domestic relations and is reviewing practice standards and applicable statutes in order to formulate recommendations for areas of improvement.

Juvenile Justice and Mental Health Subcommittee of the Legislative Task Force on the Mentally Ill in Criminal Justice: This committee focuses on obtaining consistent screening for those in the juvenile justice system and working with family advocates to assist families with mental health or juvenile justice problems.

CASA Board of Directors: OCR's Executive Director serves on the CASA Board.

CASA Legislative Committee: OCR staff was appointed to serve on the CASA legislative committee. This committee gathers information about pursuing upcoming legislation to benefit CASA programs statewide.

Our Kids, Your Kids Steering Committee: OCR is one of the founding organizations which are creating a network to support children and youth involved in the court system.

Collaboration in 2013 and Beyond: County, state, agency, and provider stakeholders meet to discuss relevant issues, initiatives, and potential legislative agendas.

Juvenile Law Section of the Colorado Bar Association: The Executive Director is the co-editor (along with Barb Shaklee of DDHS) for the Juvenile Law section of the Colorado Lawyer which involves obtaining article submissions and editing them for publication in the Colorado Lawyer.

Legislative Implementation Committees: Legislation passed by the General Assembly requires implementation by the Executive and Judicial Branches. OCR attorney staff participates in multi-disciplinary committees in order to affect the General Assembly's intent in the area of child and juvenile law.

National Association of Counsel for Children: OCR's Executive Directors serves on the NACC Board of Directors. OCR staff assists the NACC with trainings.

The Woman's Bar Association Public Policy Committee: The Legislative Liaison serves on the WBA's policy committee. This committee gathers information about pending legislation and informs legislators throughout the session.

Three Branch Institute on Adolescents in Foster Care. Colorado was awarded a grant by the National Governor's Association — Three Branch Institute on Adolescents in Foster Care to bring together representatives from the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches, county government and key permanency stakeholders to address permanency for older youth in foster care. The Executive Director and staff attorneys participate in various committees/summits held in order to affect cross-systems improvements for this vulnerable population of abused and neglected children.